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**Subject:** N&O: NC approves Atlantic Coast Pipeline through 8 counties

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BY JOHN MURAWSKI AND ANNE BLYTHE

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline was approved by North Carolina regulators on Friday, allowing the natural gas project to move ahead in eight counties.

The state Department of Environmental Quality announced the decision in a release, while critics of the project vowed legal challenges. The approval comes with a number of stringent conditions for testing and monitoring.

“DEQ left no stone unturned in our exhaustive eight month review of every aspect of the 401 application,” the DEQ Secretary Michael Regan on Friday.

“Our job doesn’t end with the granting of the permit but continues as we hold the company accountable to live up to its commitments,” DEQ said. “Our efforts have resulted in a carefully crafted permit that includes increased environmental protections, while giving us the tools we need to continue close oversight of this project as it moves forward.”

The pipeline still requires an air quality permit to operate a compressor station in Northampton County, as well as stormwater permits for Nash and Cumberland counties.

But the permit issued Friday is the main environmental permit to allow construction to move ahead on a project that is already more than a year behind schedule. The 600-mile pipeline would extend from West Virginia, crossing Virginia and bending through eastern North Carolina.

Partners in the \$5 billion project are Duke Energy, Piedmont Natural Gas and Southern Co. Gas.

This is a breaking news story. Check back for updates.